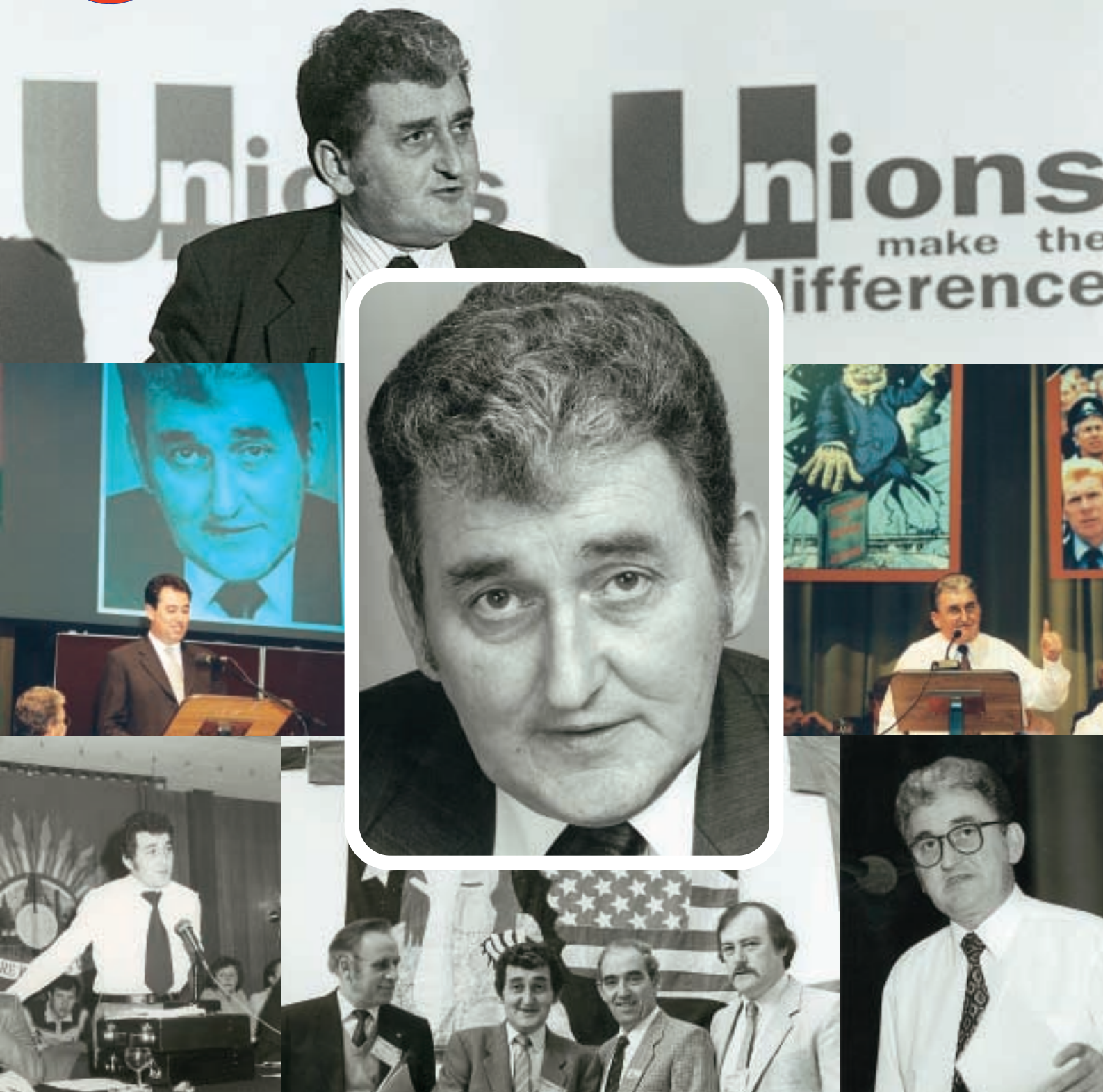




FIREFIGHTER



Farewell to Ken Cameron

FBU General Secretary

September 1980 – May 2000

Election of National Officer



AT THE close of nominations for the election of National Officer, Brother Geoff Ellis from Essex, was elected to Office unopposed.

Brother Ellis has taken up his post at Head Office and (amongst other things), will be the new Editor of Firefighter. All future contributions for consideration in the Firefighter should be forwarded to him at Head Office or by e-mail to geoffe@fbu-ho.org.uk. Should you wish to send materials by E-mail could you please send in ordinary typeface (without fancy headings or coloured text) as this is preferred by the printers and is easier to download.

FIREFIGHTER



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A vision

by Andy Gilchrist

Fire Brigades Union General Secretary

ON 1 June I succeeded Ken Cameron as General Secretary of the Fire Brigades Union. This is a great honour though obviously somewhat daunting because Ken – who would be embarrassed about me writing this – is a unique individual. There are many, many complimentary things to be said about him – a man whose heart and soul are rooted in the struggle against injustice, intolerance and inequality. The test of a leader is the legacy he leaves behind. Ken has safeguarded the future of the FBU by leaving a healthy lay democracy in place and a union committed to the principles of peace and progress.

He has steered us through some tough times. In 1993 we ran a campaign to defend our pay formula and we succeeded. Our wages remain ahead of other essential public sector workers precisely because we have maintained the formula.

We have spent the last 15 years being reviewed, investigated, monitored, you name it, it's happened to us! And every time we are found to be providing an efficient, an effective fire service, which gives the public what it deserves, value for money.

Over the past twenty months we have run the Smash and Grab campaign to stop our Employers smashing our national agreement and grabbing our hard won conditions of service. We tried to involve as many members as possible in the campaign. We also tried out new ideas and initiatives. Again, we have done very well – better than many of us could have hoped when we kicked off. Our national agreement remains intact. Those very bullish Employers on the NJC who were determined to

for the future



The challenge facing all of us in the trade union movement – rebuilding a strong and confident organisation in order to build a better world for all

break us have failed – but only because we worked to build broad – based opposition to their pernicious proposals. The report by Professor Burchill following the Inquiry, which the Government instigated into the negotiating machinery in the Fire Service, has been accepted by your delegates at FBU Annual Conference. Again, we have succeeded.

However we cannot afford to be complacent.

The FBU is a “young” union in terms of the average age of our members and we need to take this into consideration when we mount campaigns however, we also need to understand our past in order to inform debate on our future. The FBU survived the Thatcher

and Major years relatively intact compared to many of our brother and sister unions who suffered severely as a result of the Tories policy to simultaneously devastate our manufacturing industry and smash the trade union movement. All of us in the FBU know that our survival is due in no small part to the leadership of our General Secretary, Ken Cameron.

The new “buzz” words are “Partnership” and “Best Value”. We have made it clear to our Employers and to Government that the FBU has no problem with either concept. The Union committed itself to Best Value in 1918 – it is written in the foreword to our rulebook “to serve the community by encouraging its members to be skilled at their craft”. The Audit Commission, the Government’s own watchdog, has consistently praised our performance. The most recent performance indicators state “The fire service remains, overall, a high – performing one.” We are pro-partnership, providing it is a partnership of equals. Our priority will be to safeguard our members and the public. We know better than anyone that Cuts Cost Lives.

As I said earlier, Ken is a hard act to follow but I will certainly do all I can to bring energy, drive and new ideas to the leadership of our union in order to meet the challenges posed by a rapidly changing workplace and workforce. I want to marry our proud past with a bold future.

Ken and I share many political beliefs, not least that our union, indeed any union, is only as strong as the members make it. We want, we need, a lively, questioning and participative membership. This is the challenge facing all of us in the trade union movement – rebuilding a strong and confident organisation in order to build a better world for all.

BURCHILL REPORT

A vindication of 'smash and grab'

by **John McDonald**

Brigade chair, Strathclyde

THE Burchill Report was instigated after two years of the "smash and grab" campaign. The conclusions of the report are:

- no unilateral changes to conditions of service.
- the union retains its right to strike over any trade dispute.
- the status quo applies to pay, annual leave, duty systems.

Members will be aware that there are 14 Sections contained within the Grey Book.

One change has been agreed by both sides to section X1 Para 12 (settlement of differences). The union has been successful in convincing Professor Burchill in its argument that all differences of opinion are disputable. The union has also achieved the appointment of an independent "chair" to deliberate on disputes.

The report is a vindication of the "smash and grab" campaign.

HISTORY OF THE DISPUTE

In 1999 the employers pursued their aim of breaking up the the NJC. The employers put their ten-point plan to the NJC meeting of the 14 March 1999. Their main proposals were for:

- local flexibility.
- deletion of extra statutory annual leave. *loss of NHS reimbursement charges.
- capability.
- incremental progression to be dependent on acceptable performance and good conduct.

The 1999 annual conference rejected the employers' proposals. The employers were informed that "we would commence a ballot for strike action", if they attempted to impose unilateral changes to the "Grey Book".

The "smash and grab" campaign was intensified. Thousands of firefighters demonstrated their support for the union's position by lobbying the NJC meeting of 15 June 1999. Members wrote to politicians, lobbied fireboard meetings and visited their surgeries to put our case for retaining the Conditions of Service.

Many on the employers' side accepted the logic of the FBU position that the NJC was the forum for determining pay and Conditions of Service. They realised that a "small group of politicians" was orchestrating the break-down in industrial relations on the employers' side.

The majority of councillors could see that some of their members were working to their own political agenda. That agenda was:

- smash the FBU;
- attack and worsen the conditions of firefighters and control staff;

They claimed that the union did not represent our membership. That was their mistake

Strathclyde FBU achieved the first break in the employers' ranks. The convenor of Strathclyde Fire Board, councillor Joe Shaw, responded to a letter from the FBU. He made it clear that the board had no intention of supporting councillors' Ritchie, Conlon and Walker's campaign to destroy Conditions of Service. Recognition of this principled stand by the Fire Board was expressed by the FBU.

Despite their assertion that changes to conditions would only be made subject to agreement between both sides, the employers attempted to impose new contracts in West Yorkshire, Manchester and London.

Successful strike ballots were held in two of the brigades and conditions of service were protected.



Members lobby the NJC

So much for their claim that the “smash and grab” campaign did not have the support of FBU members.

The successful strike ballots led to the Burchill Inquiry. The proviso being that neither side would attempt to alter Conditions of Service during the course of the inquiry.

Once again the employers were exposed as being deceitful and to be liars when they attempted to impose new contracts in Northern Ireland. They were not successful. This was due to the admirable stance of the Northern Ireland comrades. Once again this union was successful in protecting the conditions of service of our members.

The Burchill report has been overwhelmingly accepted by the Executive Council and endorsed by Annual Conference. It is a major victory for all firefighters and control staff. The NJC continues to be the forum for determining firefighters' Conditions of Service.

I reiterate that there have been no unilateral changes to the Grey Book. FBU members have retained our right to strike.

The employers will not give up. There are ongoing reviews into pensions, rank structures, and amalgamation of controls.

This union has shown once again, that we are the only organisation that can defend the Fire Service.

The union has faced political attacks. It stood accused of being militant. The FBU leadership were pilloried and accused of not representing the membership.

This victory has answered those lies. We have emerged from this dispute as a stronger organisation determined to protect our members. The discipline and solidarity of our membership achieved this victory.

I take this opportunity to thank every FBU member for the support and solidarity shown during this campaign.

RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE BURCHILL REPORT

- An amendment to Section 12 of the Constitution (Section XI of the Scheme of Conditions of Service) that will provide automatic recourse to conciliation via ACAS where there is a failure to agree.
- An amendment to Section 12 of the Constitution that will provide for an arbitrator to decide whether an issue is arbitral or not if either party questions this.
- Retention of unilateral recourse to arbitration where conciliation fails to settle a dispute.
- Section 12 to be amended in such a way that the implications of unilateral recourse to arbitration are clear to all.
- Where the parties agree that a dispute should be dealt with at local level, a failure to agree should automatically go to ACAS for conciliation, with unilateral recourse to arbitration if this fails. The parties at local level will deal with the whole process.
- The Independent Chair of the Disputes Committee will decide disputes over what constitutes the status quo.
- An Independent Chair will be appointed to the National Joint Council.
- Day to day negotiations within the National Joint Council will be streamlined via the establishment of a small Sub Committee to undertake these, which will be chaired by the Independent Chair of the whole NJC.
- Procedural time limits will be strictly adhered where there is no agreement between the parties to vary these.

There is also a proposal for ACAS to establish a secretariat to deal with fire service matters.

No fee to be set free



by **Brian Moss**
Brigade Secretary,
Staffordshire

SOME 12 months on from what can only be described as a desperate and ill-conceived attempt to balance the budget, the spectre of charging for Road Traffic Accidents still haunts Staffordshire.

It was 26 March 1999 when the Combined Fire Authority took the disgraceful step of extending the previous charging regime to include all Special Service Calls. That's right, all Special Services: RTAs, chemical spills, lift rescues, animal rescues, people trapped in machinery. You name it, everything and anything. The Authority had previously charged for some incidents, but never where these were of an emergency nature.

To say that we were outraged and taken by surprise would be the understatement of the year, but more surprising was the way in which the Authority totally disregarded public opinion. In the previous December, the Service had undertaken a consultation exercise in the form of a public survey. In a nutshell, the results concluded that 89% of Council Tax payers were prepared to pay more to support the Service and over 70% did not want to see extra charges being made for specific incidents such as road traffic incidents.

The decision was no less distasteful for being made against a backdrop of a below average SSA settlement or for the fact that there is generally support from the Constituent



Authorities with spending at around 11% above SSA.

So why was this policy conceived? Well, the reality is that there was no policy. No one knew how, when and where the charges would be made or even how these were to be collected. The CFO was given some discretion to waive charges in exceptional circumstances, but this would only be where the "customer" could demonstrate an inability to pay.

It makes you wonder if the whole thing was designed to fail. It also makes you wonder that if some form of visual presentation had been available, then there may have been a different outcome to the meeting, but that is another story.

Well of course, we went straight to the press. There being no defined policy the Brigade took a hammering and was unable to answer some of the more searching questions. We took the view that the public was now being asked to pay for the same service three times:

1. Taxation.
2. Increases in insurance premiums.
3. As individuals when "billed" and not covered by insurance.

There was considerable coverage by the local media, including television and radio stations with numerous calls condemning the move, being received. The Brigade was

heavily criticised for ignoring public opinion. After all, whatever your views, as a Public Service, best value demands that these views be sought and taken into consideration.

Although we led the criticism, the pressure to get this decision reversed was being applied by the public and the rank and file who were disgusted at the prospect of having to charge for basic humanitarian aid.

As representatives, we wrote expressing our concerns to local MPs, district and borough councils and the constituent authorities. We also encouraged individual members to write to their local councillor. It was quite apparent that all local politicians were going to face the backlash and yet most of them had played no part or even been consulted.

The next step was to unite with the public and show our opposition by petitioning in the streets, so we jumped in the car and headed for Hanley and Stafford town centres, hoping we didn't have an accident on the way, just in case the third party insurance didn't cover us.

With completed forms returned from families and friends and just a couple of hours spent standing in the street, we were able to present a petition of nearly 5,000 irate signatories. Significantly more than matching the Service's own survey, and all opposed to the charges. The petition was presented at the next meeting of the Fire Authority and had the desired effect. Elected members awoke to the electorate's dismay, now asked probing questions and sought assurance that individuals were not going to be met with bills for hundreds of pounds.

The CFO was required to draw up a protocol and in view of the continuing concerns, check the legality of such charges and suggest proposals for any exemptions to those charges. Again, depending on your point of view, it's worth noting that neighbouring Authorities did, at best, question the policy and at worst, totally condemn and oppose it.

The whole issue dragged on and the implementation date was continually put back. Emergency Joint Consultative Committees were followed by further Authority meetings and each time the policy was watered down. Finally, the Fire Authority decided to scrap the proposals for all but the most controversial, the rescue of casualties from RTAs.

That's right, no charge for the rescue of animals, not that I'm suggesting there should be, but £215 per vehicle where casualties required releasing. Unbelievable! There were a couple of exceptions, no charge for persons under the age of 16, incidents involving fatalities and of course, no charge if fire was involved.

The Authority was eager to stress that accident victims would only be expected to pay through their insurance companies, never out of their own pockets. We were informed that insurance premiums for residents of Staffordshire would probably increase as a result.

Further meetings took place, where our concerns that the public may be reluctant to call the Service for fear of being charged were raised, but to no avail. The watered down policy was implemented in September 1999, nearly six months after it was originally tabled. We continued to raise our objections and members were asked to keep us advised of any occasions where turnouts were delayed or where complaints were received. It was recognised that the policy

would be reviewed in February 2000 prior to the budget being set for the following year.

As it was, the policy was reconsidered at the Fire Authority meeting on 31 March 2000 only a month after the new CFO had been reported as voicing criticism of it. It was decided to cease charging

for RTAs. The reason for this U-turn was reported as being that the level of income being generated was not worth the adverse publicity, and of course, in line with best value as a responsible Authority, they had listened to the concerns of the public and members of staff. It's a pity it took them 12 months and all that aggro before they heard us.

The purpose of writing this article is not to seek any form of recognition for this small but important victory, merely to thank those who played their part, FBU members and the public alike, and to remind us all that we don't have to accept things for the way they are. It should also seek to remind those in authority that they are, and will be held accountable. In these times of Best Value, I sincerely hope that the lesson has been learned, that both Central and Local Government cannot afford to ignore the views of the people – and the Fire Brigades Union.

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FOCUS ON THE CAR INDUSTRY

Time to make a stand

by Dave Carter
West Midlands

THE history of the car manufacturing industry in Britain is a long and proud one and at the front of technology for many years has been car manufacturing in the Birmingham area. I am writing of a once great institution that started life in the Nineteenth Century, was sucked dry in the Twentieth Century and is being sold off and destroyed in the Twenty First Century. I write of course about Rover.

Following the horrendous decision by BMW to sell off the Rover Group (or what is left of it), up to 50,000 jobs have been left in jeopardy in the West Midlands, affecting up to 250,000 dependants. The ongoing effects on the economy of the Region will be disastrous – our members in Yorkshire, South Wales, Staffordshire, Nottingham and Warwickshire will know what I mean – the satisfaction that there will be a shelf stacking job at the Tesco site at Longbridge is no comfort at all.

What we are talking about is paying back for the nineteen years of Thatcherism which saw the complete demise of the British Car industry – a dodgy deal to sell to British Aerospace with a few hundred million pounds in tax dodges as a carrot is no way to run things! Then allow a sell off to BMW who obviously came in for the 4x4 technology and the engineering skills. Now that they have got what they wanted, it's goodbye without conscience (they even sent Rover technicians to Germany, telling them to buy property over there and after twelve months sacking them), crying that they lost hundreds of millions of pounds, but forgetting to mention that they have gained all the technology from Land Rover (they are now producing their own 4x4 vehicle), and have sold it for two billion pounds to an American



The FBU No. 7 Region banner among dozens of others

Company, that is already sacking two thousand employees in Britain. For some reason, they also forgot to mention that they have developed two new vehicles (how much did that cost?), and are going to produce these cars in another country – heard this one before?

Which brings me to the Rover March – what a day! If anyone thinks that trade unionism is dead, the answer was on the streets of Birmingham on 1 April. Eighty thousand people cannot be wrong! Rover workers, easily identified in their red coats and overalls, led the March. Thousands of women pushing prams, children walking with their parents holding home made signs and flags, members of the general public who had nothing to do with Rover – and then they came – trade union banner after trade union banner, from every corner of the country and even from Spain, France and Italy. The FBU banner from Number Seven Region proudly amongst the others (although no-one saw the RFU – perhaps they had not heard about the problem or have not got a banner, who knows – who cares). What a sight and a very proud moment.

The biggest trade union march ever seen in Britain taking place in the year 2000 despite the oppression of all those Tory years, taking place in the shadow of a Labour



JOHN HARRIS/REPORTINGDIGITAL.COM



JESS HARRIS/REPORTINGDIGITAL.COM

Ford jobs blow

Government that seems hell bent on finishing the job that Thatcher started. Trade unions finished? NEVER!

The answer to the problem? Quite easy – nationalise, put money into Rover, use the expertise, the knowledge, the willing, and start promoting the company – wouldn't it be nice if we had a Deputy Prime Minister nicknamed "Two Rovers".

When our Ministers are seen arriving at meetings in Europe and America, let them pull up in Rovers, built in Longbridge to such a high standard that the representatives from other countries want one as well, instead of a BMW or Mercedes. Let's start ourselves – staff cars in all Brigades should be Rovers, talk to management and let them know where we stand, let the FBU be at the front – only buy Rovers for Head Office vehicles.

This is only the start of the problem that is about to hit us, we have seen factories close, pits shut down, whole industries vanish – when did you last hear of someone starting an apprenticeship? We cannot carry on trading unless we have something to trade, and to wipe out industry in the way that it has been wiped out in the last twenty years is suicide. So, we need to make a stand, and the best time and subject to make the stand on? Yes, ROVER.

FORD has announced a radical shake-up of its loss-making European car operations with an end to car production at its biggest UK plant, Dagenham, with the loss of 1,900 jobs. The job losses come on top of 1,350 job cuts announced earlier this year. Production at Dagenham is set to end by early 2002.

The job blow comes just three days after Rover's giant Longbridge plant was saved from closure when the Phoenix consortium bought the loss-making carmaker from BMW.

Unions at Ford reacted angrily to the news. Tony Woodley of the Transport and General Workers Union said that the unions were "very angry...in order to be in the car manufacturing business you have to make cars." The unions are particularly upset that two years ago Ford had promised further investment in new car production at Dagenham.

The global car giant tried to soften the blow by unveiling a series of other investments in the UK. Nick Scheele, chair of Ford Europe, said Dagenham would become Ford's "global centre" for the production of diesel engines. Scheele promised to create 500 new jobs at its engine manufacturing operation at Dagenham but that would be over a number of years.

In further restructuring Ford also announced the closure or sale of production facilities in Portugal, Poland and at Minsk, Belarus.

Labour Research Department



by Les Reid

FBU Branch Secretary, London Region

On Friday 10 March, Ken Livingstone MP and several other notable speakers addressed a rally of FBU members from London, Strathclyde, Merseyside, West Yorkshire, West Midlands and elsewhere at the London Fire Brigade Headquarters opposite Millbank. The rally was held following a March from the Imperial War Museum to mark the fact that 5 of the Homerton 11 were taking part in a discipline hearing day inside the Brigade Headquarters.

Surrounded by several of the Homerton 11 and FBU members wearing Ken for Mayor sweatshirts and waving placards highlighting the recent FBU Region 11 vote returns from the Labour Party Mayoral selection process, he was greeted by thunderous applause and whistling from the enthusiastic crowd.

In his speech he declared his complete support for the 11 FBU members and expressed his dismay at the process which had led to their suspension and subsequent discipline hearing. He also declared that if elected to the office of Mayor for London, and given the support of the FBU and others he had no doubts about this result, he would make his opinion of the current crisis in relations between the FBU and managements in the LFB quite clear to those running the Service in London.

If necessary, he stated that he would reinstate the 11 if

they were dismissed, by appointing new Fire Authority members who would do just that. He went on to say that he wanted to see the management of the LFCDA taking sincere and full note of the wishes and thoughts of the firefighters and others in the LFB by working in co-operation with the FBU and other trade unions in the Authority. This would be fully realised on his election by the appointments made to the new Fire Authority for London, which would be in place in July.

In his speech he went on to state that he believed the treatment of the 11 was nothing less than shameful at a time

Rather than forcing firefighters to work longer hours, there must be more recruitment to lower the unemployment levels in London

when cuts had been forced upon the fire cover for London. He reiterated the fact that these cuts had seen the reduction of firefighters from 7,000 in 1984 to less than 5,600 today, the removal of fire appliances and the closure of stations, a situation he would be reversing once elected. He explained that if money was the problem, then more money would be spent where necessary, to maintain and increase fire cover.

He concluded his speech by reference to the 11 again,

... and the Millbank 1

saying that rather than forcing firefighters to work longer hours, there must be more recruitment to lower the unemployment levels in London, a result of the policies of the market place, an increasing population, and the financial sector cutbacks, with the resultant lessening of hours worked in this highly dangerous occupation. In doing so, the management would once again be showing their respect and dignity towards those on the front-line serving the people of London.

Following this speech and the thunderous roars of approval, Ken went on to make the obligatory press statements and photocall, minus the baby he held at the previous rally in the Hackney Empire Theatre.

Similar sentiments were also expressed in a later speech by John Cryer MP, the MP for Hornchurch, which had recently seen the loss of a fire appliance despite being the largest ground in the London Brigade area.

He expressed his shame at the fact that a Labour-run Fire Authority had cut the Service at a time when calls and deaths and injuries from fire were increasing. He was absolutely appalled at the regime of cuts to the Service being perpetrated not just in London, but elsewhere, which were leaving some areas with minimal fire cover at best.

In his speech he also expressed his outrage at a management style that had prevented the Green Watch members who were on duty on 1 January from attending a fire call just after the Senior Officers arrived at the station to suspend some of those on duty. He felt that such an activity was incomprehensible when lives could have been put at risk – an act that any firefighter or Senior Officer could only view as a major failing on the part of management to protect the people of London.

He left all present in no doubt that it was only right and proper that the management of the Authority took full note of the concerns raised by the firefighters through their union and worked with the FBU to provide Londoners with the cover they deserve rather than creating unrest where none was necessary.



HOMERTON RESULT

The Homerton 11 discipline hearings re-convened on the 28, 29 and 30 March. The first hearing to be concluded was for the six Green Watch members, all of who had their charge of conduct prejudicial to discipline not proven.

The Blue Watch hearing concluded the following day. The Blue Watch members had their charge of the same offence proven against them and they were awarded a reprimand. One member who had an additional charge of insubordination had the case found not proven.

There is no right of appeal against an award of a reprimand. However, our Blue Watch members are unhappy with aspects of the way that their case was investigated and conducted and are considering any legal redress that may be open to them.

The London Regional Committee wish to thank all members who have supported the Homerton 11 campaign, by submitting Form 10s; attending the marches and lobbies; and by wearing stickers on their uniforms. Eleven loyal members faced the sack on New Year's Day for the crime of supporting their union's overtime ban. Our campaign has ensured that all eleven members have kept their jobs.

The first of the union's internal disciplinary hearings against members who broke the overtime ban during the Millennium celebrations took place recently. Three members had the case proven against them and were awarded maximum fines. Further hearings will be held.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PAY

How does our pay compare?



Labour Research Department report

COMPARABILITY is always an important issue when pay awards are up for negotiation. Union members often want to know how their pay compares with other groups over a period of years. Changes in the timing of settlements, staged awards and other differences can make this sort of comparison difficult. And there is always the question of what year to start from. Here the Labour Research Department takes a look at a recent report, published by the local government Employers' Organisation, which takes a long-term view of pay comparisons in local government.

Local government employs over two million people in England and Wales, 9% of all employees. The workforce is covered by over 20 national negotiating bodies. Groups that come within the scope of local authority employment include manual and white-collar staff, craft workers, youth and community workers, police and the fire service. The latter two groups have their pay rises determined by pay formulas (for the police this takes place through a statutory negotiating board). School teachers in England and Wales are covered by a statutory Review Body that advises the government on what pay levels it should set.

What happens to pay in the local government field is of wider interest, not least to groups in the voluntary sector whose pay may be linked to the local government settlement. Other public sector workers take an interest in what local government groups, like the police and school teachers, have received. And local authorities play a big role in every local labour market, so workers in the private sector may also



Demonstrating for the Grey Book

be indirectly affected by council workers' pay settlements.

In a recent report, Pay in local government 2000, the Employers' Organisation set out how pay awards since 1979 for key local government groups had compared with those of the private sector (see table). Figures for the private sector were drawn from the Confederation of British Industry's Databank on private manufacturing while other private sector information was drawn from Industrial Relations Services (IRS). The first of August was treated as the start of each pay year.

Taken as a whole, the report concludes that pay levels negotiated by local government have generally "done no more than move broadly in line with pay elsewhere in the labour market." Where there were major changes in relative pay for local government employees over the last 20 years, these stemmed mainly from government pay policies, special enquiries and comparability awards (which took place mainly in the late 1970s).

From the figures in the table the report concludes that "over the long term, the teachers' negotiating group is the one that has most closely mirrored the private sector average for basic pay settlements." Local government manual and staff (APT&C) groups, which since 1997 have been covered by a single status agreement (as reflected in the table) have generally been slightly behind the private sector average. Firefighters and the police have generally fared better than the private sector.

The employers' report also looks at comparative trends in earnings, using data from the official New Earnings Survey (NES). The year from which such comparisons begin can have a significant impact on the results, since there are clear "cycles" in the labour market. These reflect a combination of boom and bust in the private sector along with government pay and spending policies. The report acknowledges the risk of "subjectively highlighting the effects of any particular time periods" and includes figures from 1970 when the New Earnings Survey began.

Commenting on the earnings figures the report says: "In the long-term the average earnings of local government manual employees have improved slightly in relation to private sector manuals." But the reverse is true for non-manuals "with the relative deterioration in earnings being more marked for female workers."

With so much information to consider, interpretation of long-range pay comparisons is often a matter of debate, and

LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYERS' SUMMARY OF PAY SETTLEMENTS 1979 to 2000

	Private sector	Manuals	APT&C	Teachers	Fire-fighters	Police
79-80	16.7	11.9	15.0	14.6	20.5	13.5
80-81	9.6	7.5	7.5	7.5	18.8	21.3
81-82	7.0	6.9	5.7	6.0	10.1	13.2
82-83	5.8	4.9	4.9	5.0	7.5	10.5
83-84	6.0	4.5	4.8	5.1	7.8	8.4
84-85	6.4	5.1	5.6	8.5	6.9	5.1
85-86	6.3	8.1	5.9	5.7	7.2	7.5
86-87	5.1		7.5	16.4	7.3	7.5
	18.0					
87-88	5.9		5.6	5.4	7.3	7.75
88-89	7.6	5.6	8.8	7.0	8.6	8.5
89-90	8.7	8.8	9.38	9.5	8.6	9.25
90-91	8.0	9.38	6.4	9.3	9.5	9.75
91-92	4.4	6.4	4.1	7.5	5.6	8.5
92-93	2.7	4.1	1.5	1.5	4.9	6.5
93-94	2.5	1.5	2.4 ²	2.9	1.4	1.5
94-95	3.0	2.4+2.2 ²	2.2 ²	2.7	2.2	3.0
95-96	3.2	2.9	2.9	3.75 ³	3.5	3.0
96-97	3.0	2.82 ⁴		3.3 ³	4.4	3.5
97-98	3.5	3.0		3.8	4.8	3.5
98-99	3.0	3.0		3.6	5.6	4.0
99-00	-	-		3.3 ⁵	2.0	3.6

1. Until 1989-90 private sector settlements are manufacturing settlements, later settlements are all private sector.

2. The 1993-94 APT&C first stage settlement ran for 11 months from 1 July 1994 to 31 May 1995. Manuals received a similar settlement from 1 September 1994 – in the following pay round – but effective for only nine months. Both groups received an identical second stage settlement from 1 June 1995, over 10 months until April 1996. The cost of the settlement has been calculated on the two paybills as worth 2.4% over the first stage and 2.2% over the second stage. The annualised value of each settlement is reckoned at 2.6%.

3. Both the 1995-96 and 1996-97 awards were staged by the government, with the first part paid in April and the remainder from December. The annualised values of the awards have been reckoned at 3.1% in 1995-96 and 2.43% in 1996-97.

4. The combined paybill increase for both groups was 2.82%, including assimilation costs resulting from the introduction of single status. The majority of employees received 2.5%.

5. This is the School Teachers' Review Body recommendation for 1999-2000 and had not yet been accepted at the time of printing.

unions representing public sector workers have their own views on which comparisons and time periods are the most appropriate. According to the Employers' Organisation, figures in the report support the view that public sector workers "do relatively well compared with private sector employees during periods of minimal or negative economic growth, but fare worse during times of economic prosperity."



HEALTH AND SAFETY

Staff from Her Majesty's Railways Inspectorate (part of the Health and Safety Executive) at the scene of the Paddington rail crash

MPs and unions call for new approach from safety executive

A HIGHLY critical House of Commons select committee has called on the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to increase its investigation and prosecution record as a matter of urgency.

The Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee looking into the work of the HSE found that it only investigates 6% of the 57,000 major injury accidents reported to it each year and 10% of severe injury cases. Just 20% of incidents where a death has occurred led to a prosecution.

The TUC has called for more resources for the HSE, while John Edmonds, general secretary of the GMB general union, has called for a change in policy. "Employers are legally required to protect their workforce," he said. "As the vast majority of accidents are preventable, the HSE must heed the call of the select committee to investigate and ensure that employers really do learn from their mistakes. The GMB shall

be writing to the director general of HSE, Jenny Bacon, to demand an immediate change of policy on this important matter."

The government has responded to another recommendation in the report – that legislation to introduce the crime of corporate killing is brought forward as soon as possible. It has announced it will consult this spring on its plans to implement a 1996 Law Commission recommendation to change the law to make it easier to prosecute company directors and companies for manslaughter.

The current law of corporate manslaughter has been notoriously difficult to use in practice. In February this year, the High Court ruled that the unsatisfactory state of the law made it impossible to convict a company for corporate manslaughter, and this was confirmed in the Court of Appeal in the case against Great Western Trains after the 1997 Southall train crash.

'Poor safety culture' helped cause Southall crash

FRAGMENTATION of the rail industry as a result of privatisation and a poor safety culture contributed to the 1997 Southall rail crash, which resulted in the deaths of seven people and injured more than 140. So says the long-awaited report of the official inquiry, by Professor John Uff, published recently.

Although driver error was the primary cause, the inquiry also blamed Great Western Trains for failing to ensure that the automatic warning system (AWS) and the automatic train protection (ATP) was in operation on the express train involved in the accident. In addition it said that Railtrack, the rail infrastructure company, should have had rules in place to prevent trains running when AWS was not in operation.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) gave a three-week deadline for responses from the train operating companies on how they intend to implement the recommendations contained in the report. It has also invited industry and trade union representatives and other interested parties to a meeting on 17 April to discuss their responses and prepare an agreed action plan, which will be made public.

Michael Rix, general secretary of train drivers' union ASLEF, said: "The whole industry now needs to go further in addressing the systematic lessons of this tragedy, and renew our entire safety culture. ASLEF is ready to play its full part, and once again sends its condolences to the families of those who perished in this terrible tragedy."

Families of the victims of the Southall crash condemned John Prescott's decision to allow Railtrack to keep most of its safety responsibilities, by creating a new subsidiary of the company. They say he should have waited for the outcome of the Uff inquiry before making his decision.

The families along with unions and safety campaigners are also unhappy that he is refusing to force the installation of ATP, which could cost around £2 billion, and has instead decided to install a cheaper system, the train protection warning system, on routes operating up to 100 mph, which will cost only £330 million.



The Thorp reprocessing plant at Sellafield

Closure threat for Sellafield

BRITISH Nuclear Fuels (BNFL) has been threatened with the closure of commercial activities at its Sellafield nuclear reprocessing plant after an investigation by the Health and Safety Executive's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate (NII). The investigation was prompted by a series of safety incidents and the discovery of a set of falsified data concerning fuel exported to Japan.

The NII found "systematic management failures" to blame, as well as "poor ergonomic design of the plant, the tedium of the job, and the ease with which the computer data logging system could be manipulated." And it says that a poor safety culture has resulted from the thousands of job losses in the run up to privatisation – the government plans to sell 49% of the company. Both the NII and unions blamed management for the safety failures.

Greenpeace called the report a "shocking exposure of Sellafield's plutonium business" and for an end to nuclear reprocessing. However, Jack Dromey, spokesperson for BNFL trade unions, said that urgent action is now needed to save the 20,000-strong company, and that the workforce is determined to play its part in putting right what has gone wrong.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Personal trauma that drove an MP to demand jail for bosses who commit 'corporate homicide'

I saw what the King's Cross fire did – now I want justice

by **Andrew Dismore**
Labour MP for Hendon

Three days after the terrible fire at Kings Cross, which I'd been asked to investigate as solicitor for four firemen involved, I visited the Tube Station. Nothing I'd previously experienced could have prepared me for the sights and smells left by the devastation and terrible human tragedy of the fire; twisted, unrecognisable metal, charred wooden remains, walls completely black from smoke and flames. Incongruously, trains still ran through the lower level, apparently untouched by the wreckage above.

During the following weeks, I listened to the stories of victims, distraught relatives, firefighters and Tube staff. I sat through months of the public inquiry as the story of management failure and incompetence was slowly revealed; the failure of London

Underground to learn from previous fires on the Tube; the inadequate protective clothing issued to firefighters, exposing them to burns as their plastic leggings and gloves melted in the heat.

But what struck me as outrageous was that, while London Underground eventually accepted responsibility for compensation, neither it nor its managers faced criminal charges over those 31 deaths in 1987.

Even now, when I use Kings Cross Tube station and pass the memorial to the fire's victims, it sends a shiver down my spine. I passionately believe we must address the injustices and legal loopholes revealed by the inquiry and the many disasters since.

I was something of a campaigning lawyer, and involved in

politics as a local councillor. Perhaps it was in the blood, in that my grandfather, father and mother had all been councillors. Indeed, my father was killed in an accident while on council business when I was 11, and this might subconsciously have influenced my decision to become a personal injury lawyer in the first place.

Shortly after Kings Cross, I was one of a small group of lawyers who formed a new organisation – the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers –, which, perhaps unusually for the legal

profession, had the prime object of putting accident victims first and foremost. Over the years, we've built a powerful lobby for those hurt or bereaved through no fault of their own. My fight for victims' rights has involved me in arguments with Ministers and MPs, and a successful battle in the House of Lords to prevent the cutting of compensation

for victims of crime.

There have been other victories. The Fire Brigades Union fought successfully for better protective clothing for firefighters, and London Underground has made major strides in improving Tube safety.

However, the central problem remains: companies escaping their responsibility after a tragedy. In the past ten years, more than 3,000 people have been killed at work, and hundreds of members of the public have met their deaths due to corporate neglect. But only two companies have ever been successfully prosecuted for manslaughter. OLL Limited was convicted over the canoeing accident, which killed four teenagers in Lyme

Safety awareness should lie with those at the top, the chairmen and chief executives on huge salaries, not employees such as train drivers who are made the fall guys



Bodies are loaded onto ambulances outside King's Cross Station in London after the 1987 blaze that killed 31 people

Regis Bay when they were swept out to sea. The second case involved Jackson Transport, a company where a young employee was drenched with a deadly chemical.

These convictions expose the absurdity of the law of manslaughter as it stands. Because prosecutions rely on similar legal principles to the common law against manslaughter that is applied to private individuals, companies – however reckless or negligent – are almost certain to escape unless a senior manager, its “controlling mind”, can be found guilty.

This makes the law biased against small firms, where it is much easier to identify who is to blame. Large concerns escape when the accident is not due to the failure of an individual, but due to the overall failings of the management. It is only by imposing duties on the senior directors that safety will be given the same priority as profit. Safety awareness should lie with those at the top, the chairmen and chief executives on huge

salaries, not employees such as train drivers who are made the fall guys.

My Corporate Homicide Bill would put directors in the dock, alongside their companies, because it would create a new criminal offence of corporate killing where management failures fell below reasonable expectations and resulted in someone's death. It is equally important that judges have new powers to order them to put things right for the future. This Bill is not about bashing responsible companies, it is about safety. Many companies do a good job, but some do not, and escape their just desserts.

If we are to prevent further tragedies, to avoid more Hillsboroughs, Paddingtons and Kings Crosses, we need tough new laws. We must never again allow perpetrators of serious accidents to escape prosecution on a legal technicality.

The Mail on Sunday

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Health and safety – a future view



by **Les Reid**
FBU Health and Safety
Representative

ON FRIDAY 17 March Health and Safety Representatives from a host of trades unions gathered at the TUC Head Office, Congress House, London, to debate the TUC response to a document put out by the Health and Safety Commission. This document, DDE 12 – Employee Consultation and Involvement in Health and Safety, had been sent out by the HSC:

- to explain why the HSC believe greater employee involvement in Health and Safety issues is beneficial;
- to describe current law, practice and HSC/E initiatives;
- to outline some of the opportunities and challenges to greater worker involvement in Health and Safety issues;
- to outline and invite comment on a range of options from interested parties.

The closing date for any observation and comment to the HSC was 17 March and so the conference was organised with a view to promoting the views of many of the interested parties to others.

This included promotion of the TUC response – Doing Good and Getting Better. In this way a practical debate took place on how the responses, observations and proposals put forward could help the safety reps and safety committees



The twisted remains of the boom and cabin of a crane which killed three people when it collapsed on the construction site of the new HSBC Tower in the East London Docklands Development which includes Canary Wharf, London's tallest building. The Health and Safety Executive is launching an inquiry.

move towards better functionality and enjoy greater recognition rights and involvement in the 21st century. The debate also allowed for some comment on how the responses could be put to the government and the other parties involved in Health and Safety in order to explain, justify and seek agreement for the need for greater worker/employee involvement.

The morning session was used to explain and debate

ideas and solutions to how safety reps can explain and propose TUC/TU policies on Health and Safety.

Throughout the debate it was recognised that “Britain works best when managers and trade unions work together” and the evidence for this is clear in the reduction of accidents in places of work where the Safety Representative and Safety Committee Regulation (1977) are enforced.

The keynote speech by Ann Gibson of the TUC General Council outlined this and went on to explain that the delegates were there to tell the TUC, the government, employers and the HSC/E what trade unions want from Health and Safety in the future. And many of the speakers and delegates went on to do just that.

Bud Hudspith of the GPMU explained that since 1977 there had only been one Enforcement Notice issued under the SRSC Regulations! He stated that if the inspectors were serious about Health and Safety and wished to protect the safety reps and enforce the regulations, then they must use the power that are given to them. Several delegates explained that this was a major problem.

However, a representative from the HSE who is an inspector, pointed out that the numbers had been reduced by the previous administrations, with damaging consequences for workers and their representatives.

This was backed up by Margaret Sharkey of UCATT who went on to say that despite all the rhetoric and intentions of the government, the sad reality is that workers are still being sacked for raising health and safety matters with their employers, even if they are safety reps themselves.

This was also emphasised in a highly amusing and well received speech by Rory O'Neill, editor of *Hazards* magazine. He explained that at the end of the day information is information; power is power; we may have the information, but we are almost powerless.

Clearly the balance needed to be redressed so that health and safety placed the power to apply this information with the safety reps. Only by such redress will the killings,

maimings, injuries and ill-health cases be reduced. Hence the possibility of Provisional Improvement Notices being a way forward, as is the present case in Australia where safety reps have the right to have perceived breaches of Health and Safety Regulations held in abeyance until the safety aspects are fully explored and rectified where necessary.

In his speech, Nigel Bryson of the GMB asked the TUC and the HSC/E to promote consultation much more in the guidance and instructions that they issue to bring this aspect to the attention of the employees/workers and management.

The afternoon session was concerned with what else could be done to create better functionality and participation in health and safety. This included views on how others see that the unions want from health and safety, what needed to be done next and debate on how the unions and

the safety reps campaign for change within the trade union movement, other organisations, our own members and the government. Roger Bibbings of RoSPA, Stan Mendham of the Forum for Private Business, and Sir Neville Purvis of the British Safety Council explained their viewpoint with regard to health and safety.

On the whole, their view appeared positive, but it was notable that Mr. Mendham pleaded for less bureaucracy for his group, small businesses, and went to great pains to explain the present pitfalls for health and safety for his members – their difficulty in applying “complex” legislation and the wants in terms of health and safety by trade unions in these enterprises. Many from the floor took great exception to this, especially as they claimed that much of industry is moving from large scale enterprises to small/medium enterprises and this trend could mean increasing health and safety problems for the workers/employees in such enterprises.

Richard Clifton from the HSE Policy Unit, made representations as to the reasoning behind the document, including the fact that the Labour Government were willing to listen to

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Health and safety – a future view

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all sides in this debate. This was a totally opposite position from the previous administrations who sold off the family silver and were unwilling to gold-plate what was left thereby reducing the effectiveness of all aspects of health and safety.

Colin Ettinger from the Society of Labour Lawyers added to this by explaining that law is only law if there is an effective sanction, a view endorsed by many from the floor. It was his view that the rights of safety representatives must and should be enforced and if necessary, sanctioned by the Employment Tribunals.

The overall strength of feeling from the day's events pointed towards the fact that the trade unions in general, and safety representatives in particular, need to make forceful representation to government and others about the need for greater involvement in all aspects of health and safety.

In places where no unions are recognised and there are no safety reps appointed, then serious consideration should be given by government and the HSC/E to roving safety reps having powers to inspect and report back on health and safety matters.

Where health and safety is a matter for consultation, then enforcement must be given greater emphasis, as well as the possibility of using PINs, by the HSC/E so that the best remain the best and the others get the necessary impetus to reach this level. In doing this, the government would be advancing the cause of health and safety, an element it recognises that helps give best value, and upholding the rights and safety and health of workers/employees.

It was also noted that in order to emphasise the benefits of greater worker involvement, then it was important that the TUC, the HSC/E and the government and others were informed in full detail about how health and safety issues have been resolved in the workplace for the benefit of the unions, their members and the employers. In doing this, health and safety can move forward to give everyone the protection they deserve – a safe and healthy workplace in the new millennium.

In this, the FBU and those in the FBU who are involved in health and safety, can play a major part for the benefit of workers everywhere.

GENERAL SECRETARY

Judge made law

IN HIS book *The British Political System* Communist John Gollan included a chapter "Law and Order". The book was published in 1954 – before I was born! But it is a "good read" for anyone wanting to clarify the relationship between the State, the Law and the Trade Union Movement.

Two references in particular caught my eye. The first is a reference to my own union's – the FBU – involvement in a legal case, apparently "one of the most important decisions of modern times" about which Gollan writes:

"The 'impartial' upholders of the law made a decision without law!"

One for me to now go away and research!

The second reference reads thus:

"Citrine's (famous for his expertise in chairing meetings!) observation in a letter to *The Times*, in May 1927, that 'the trade union movement has little faith in either the competence or impartiality of the courts in matters affecting organised labour' is as true today as it was then."

The passage of seventy-three years has not invalidated this assertion.

Nevertheless the Labour Party was formed to give the organised working class, the trade union movement, a voice in Parliament. So however well or badly we believe they have done this, nevertheless it means that we accept the need for "good" legislation.

New Labour's Employment Relations Act represents a few steps in the right direction but we should never forget we are reclaiming ground lost during the Thatcher years rather than forging ahead.



Trade unions must start becoming more confident, more challenging and creative in rallying support for our beliefs

Readers will know the gaps in the Act which we in the trade union movement want filling – rights from day one would be a good start! The excellent work of the Institute of Employment Rights provides a framework of legislation around which unions can unite and campaign. It is necessary to say here that whilst I concur with Gollan's analysis

“... Judges as a whole in their interpretation of law have been the loyal servants of the ruling class.”

There are members of the legal profession who are honourable exceptions to this. Our own lawyers – Thompsons – act only for trade unions and the political analysis, both international and national, of John Hendy QC is invaluable to our movement, it's good to have them on our side!

Trade unions must also start becoming more confident, more challenging and creative in rallying support for our beliefs. The debate between a few General Secretaries about the “40% membership threshold” for recognition when it was also proposed that 50% membership would give automatic recognition did us little credit. This is not to underestimate the huge problems faced by many brother and sister unions as a result of derecognition. However, not

only was the discussion esoteric is it wise to

- i. Suggest we cannot persuade 50% of people in a bargaining unit to join us
- ii. Rely on the law instead of a committed workforce to get recognition?

I throw in Joe Hill's exhortation:

“Don't mourn, organise”.

If trade unions are going to fight effectively in the class war our troops need to be convinced of our cause! We want informed, involved members who participate fully in the democracy of their unions. We need the freedom to encourage this in the way most appropriate to our members – for example; figures on the participation in postal ballots do not indicate any significant extension or improvement in the involvement of members in union elections. Yes, positive legislation is to be preferred but surely the lesson for our movement over the last 30 years, following the defeat of a Labour Government's proposed bill to “regulate” trade unions, “In place of Strife”, is that good laws can only too swiftly be replaced by bad laws!

There are reasons to applaud New Labour – Marxist analysis is valid precisely because it deals in reality – the introduction of the national minimum wage, albeit at a level we consider too low; parental leave, albeit we want it to be paid ... but there is much still to be done.

Reports in the weekend media that the trade unions have pledged £15 million pounds to assist New Labour in the general election campaign have been denied. There is no doubt however that we will be stumping up considerable amounts of cash because electorally Labour is the only show in town. Nevertheless, we are entitled to expect a return on our investment. New Labour should remember that the Osborne judgement of 1910 forbade unions to levy members for financial support for Labour Party parliamentary candidates. Both the Court of Appeal and the House of Lords upheld this judgement.

This served to make the trade union movement fight even harder on behalf of the Party.

I conclude my contribution with another quote from Gollan's book, which illustrates why legislation can never be a substitute for organisation,

“The legal system exists above all to defend the capitalist state and capitalist property. So do the police.”

Andy Gilchrist

Cleveland fire control

Cleveland Fire Control Staff are refusing to move from their present location into the proposed new Teeside Emergency Control Room

by John Whitaker
CSNC Chair

ON 4 DECEMBER 1998 a bid was launched by Fire, Police and the Ambulance trust for a share of £7.8 million, made available from the Health Department under the umbrella of 'Invest to Save'.

At this meeting the Assistant Chief Constable gave a presentation at Hartlepool Civic Centre to Authority members from all three services. Myself and Steve Gregg, the Cleveland Brigade Secretary, attended this presentation and could not believe what we were hearing. Here are just a few quotes from the Pilot Bid document.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

All three services are being encouraged by government to consider income generation opportunities. There is no doubt that a shared communications centre, as it develops, has potential to generate revenue by offering other services (for example, as a call handling centre, managing alarms and security).

CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

This is by far the most important issue raised. While the present proposals for sharing succeed in largely avoiding the issue in the short term it is very likely that the tensions caused by working together will prove to be very difficult to handle, if not actually unsustainable. Our research to date reveals differing pay scales, job loading, job descriptions, career paths, supervision methods, discipline systems, union views and so forth. These are by no means insurmountable, but much work will need to be carried out to ensure existing staff are properly cared for if the proposals go ahead.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

This is the biggest risk. Differing cultures and conditions of service

give course for significant opportunity for conflict. The Police and Ambulance Services regard this as a much smaller risk than do the Fire Service where a very vocal union, The Fire Brigades Union, is involved. The proposals instigate this risk by the "sharing" concept, where separate working arrangements will continue to apply – but in a worst case scenario this could cause industrial unrest. These issues are surmountable, and the benefit to service delivery undoubtedly justifies the inherent risk. It is also mentioned that full joint working, with a pool of multi-skilled control room staff, receiving and dispatching calls for all three services is an option.

These were just a few worrying quotes from the Pilot Bid document so the staff became just a little bit concerned. As with all management, they assured us none of this would happen, we would remain autonomous and no jobs would be lost.

However, at a Fire Authority meeting, the Chair, at the time a Councillor Waller, clearly stated he could not

If being told what is happening is consultation, then of course we have been, but we all know consultation is a two-way thing.

guarantee jobs!!! Senior management have stated recently in press statements, that the FBU have been fully consulted at all times. Well, if being told what is happening is consultation, then of course we have, but we all know consultation is a two-way thing.

Cleveland, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire were all granted £2.6 million to carry out a three year pilot scheme.

Senior Officials of the Union visited Cleveland and attended the current control room, which is one of the most up to date in the country and the proposed site at Police Headquarters. To say they were surprised is an understatement and has been described by our own Fire Authority member as nothing more than a toilet and I would not put a

staff refuse to move

dog in there. Well surprise, surprise, we are still going there so they say. Woof, woof.

A Project Manager has been employed on £50,000 per annum for two years, he has visited every watch and I strongly believe he has done the Union a favour. He states in his opinion that there will be multi-skilled operators and stated equal pay for equal work.

Lots of other issues have given cause for concern and Control Staff have said enough is enough.

At a meeting attended by the General Secretary Elect, Andy Gilchrist, and the Vice President, Ruth Winters, on 4 April the Control Branch passed the following Resolution.

'Cleveland Control Branch of the Fire Brigades Union strongly oppose current proposals for the joint Control Room at Police Headquarters, Ladgate Lane, for the following reasons:

- 1. The proposed relocation area, within Ladgate Lane.**
- 2. The unproven joint Mobilising system will cost approximately £1.6 million, the current Fire Brigade Mobilising System, at an original cost of £1 million, still has a life span of 5-7 years. The Control Branch sees this as a waste of public money and will oppose any attempt to move Fire Control onto this system. The Branch is unhappy with the worsening of conditions for our membership. We believe that any move**

would have to be for the benefit of the community we serve.

If no agreement can be reached on the above issues, the Branch will have no alternative but to ballot for Industrial Action."

20 Control Staff in attendance out of 25 (2 still on duty, 1 maternity leave, 1 sick, 1 in between night-shifts, who were all in favour of the Resolution).

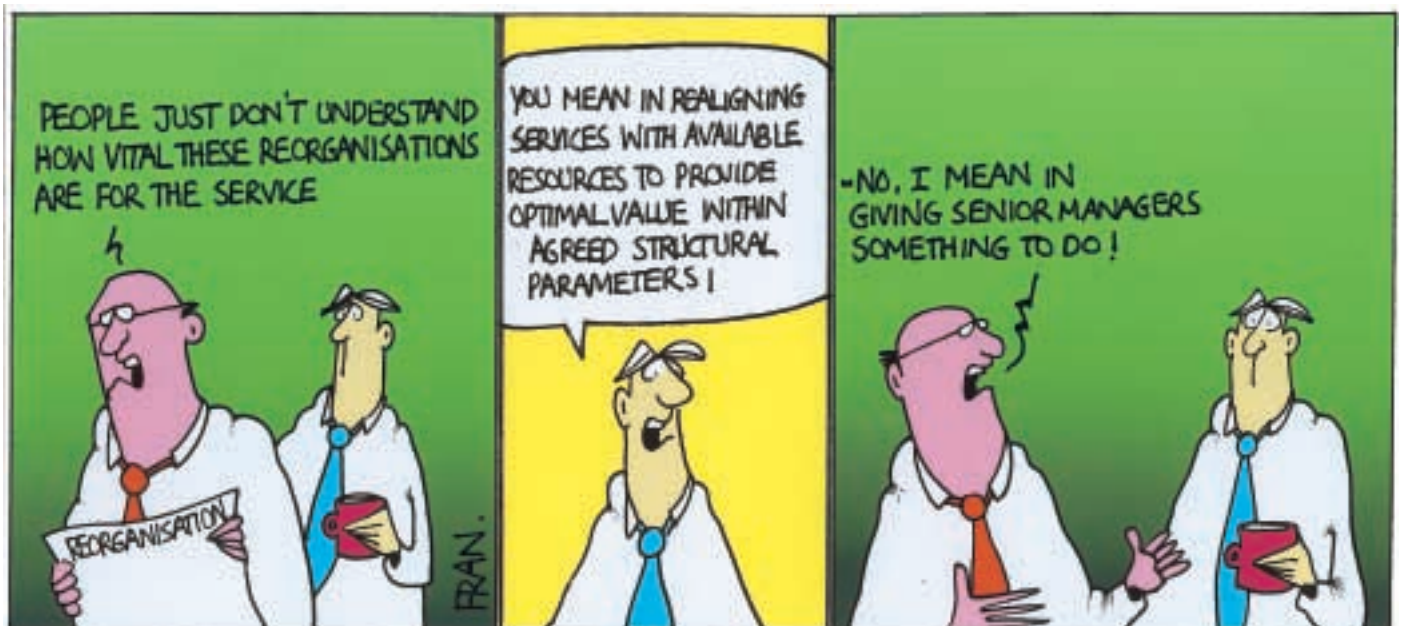
Vote: 18 for, 2 against.'

The Branch believe that this proposed move would not get one Fire Engine to an incident any quicker and strongly think it could take longer on a Windows-based computer system i.e. the Police Mobilising system.

Also it is not "Best Value" for the public as management and Authority members say. "Best Value" means that all options need to be looked into, Cleveland Fire Brigade have not done this therefore, "Best Value" has not been followed!!! Also under "Best Value" the public need to be consulted. Well, this has not happened either. Our message is clear; come up with other alternatives or we will have no option but to ballot for Industrial Action.

Cleveland Control Branch would like to thank all Union Officials for their support throughout our campaign. Special thanks go to Andy and Ruth and we will see you back in Cleveland soon.

UNITY IS OUR STRENGTH





Stephen Byers speaking at the Scottish TUC

Industry Secretary Byers to meet Scottish shipbuilders

THE Secretary of State for Trade and Industry Stephen Byers announced that he is to set up a high-level meeting to discuss with the shipbuilding industry how it can improve competitiveness and win new orders.

The announcement comes at a time when the Ministry of Defence is set to generate orders with UK yards for well over 30 major warships.

Speaking at the Scottish Trades Union Congress conference, Mr. Byers said:

"I can confirm that all warships will be built in UK yards. The first warship order will be placed by the end of the year. And last week tenders were put out for two landing ships. Only UK yards were invited to tender. I am pleased that

Govan was one of them. The MoD's procurement programme will represent a huge investment in the future of the UK shipbuilding industry.

"I am giving the industry a long-term stable platform for the next 15 to 20 years to invest. To modernise and make themselves even more competitive in the world market. Orders are coming in. We must take decisions not only on the best commercial grounds, but also in the best interest of our shipbuilding industry.

"We shall ensure that these contracts are rolled out in a way which ensures a viable, competitive future for UK yards. We will work with the industry and the unions to build a world-class industry.

"I want to discuss with the main UK shipyards and the unions the issues we face. That's why I will be convening a meeting of all interested parties to discuss steps necessary to secure a strong, competitive and forward looking shipbuilding industry.

"The MoD programme provides us with an historic opportunity. We cannot afford to miss this chance. By working together we can avoid the cycle of feast and famine that for so long has bedevilled shipbuilding in the United Kingdom.

"Not just defence contracts. In the civil sector possibilities are emerging too.

"I am committed to working with all in the shipbuilding industry to help improve its competitiveness and to win orders. I strongly believe that the shipbuilding industry has a future as a modern and dynamic part of the manufacturing sector.

"Since becoming Secretary of State I've been pleased to be able to have provided improved financial support for shipbuilding:

- Enhancing the Home Shipbuilding Credits Guarantees Scheme;
- Extending support under the Shipbuilding Intervention Fund to previously excluded yards;
- Extending support to conversion contracts;
- Encouraging productivity – no longer penalising companies by reducing financial support if they reduce their costs; and,
- Encouraging new investment – allowing a 9% profit element in calculating the level of Shipbuilding Intervention Fund – rather than basing the grant on a break-even basis.

"As the decisions taken by BMW in relation to Rover show, in a time of globalisation we face two choices. A choice between uncontrolled change, forced by the markets and commercial pressures.

"Or a process of economic reform that delivers economic efficiency and social justice in which people and their communities can be genuine partners in change and not the innocent victims of change. Let me make it clear, we will

always back the second option.

"We should note we cannot stand in the way of global economic forces. Trying to block change would be futile. In the 21st Century, successful economies and societies will be those that can adapt to the demands of rapid change; that manage change rather than being submerged by it; that equip their people to cope with change.

"It is the approach we will take across the UK. We will support industries that have a real future. Some of the industries that commentators say we should ignore.

"People in those industries, and local communities, need to know that they have a Government who are on their side.

"Earlier this week I announced developments in our energy policy which will help the offshore oil and gas industry – and the coal industry.

"Lifting the stricter consents policy will enable new gas power station developments to go ahead, where they are genuinely competitive, providing new job opportunities.

"This is good news for the offshore oil and gas industry – and those employed in it – here in Scotland. This will create a

new market and new challenges for the coal industry.

"The UK coal industry is by far most efficient in Europe. But competitors in Germany and elsewhere benefit from government subsidies.

"The aid scheme I announced on Monday will allow the coal industry to modernise and compete in the new markets that we are creating.

"Innovative, forward-looking manufacturing is the heart of knowledge driven economy. It is vital to our ability to compete in the future.

"As we begin the new Century, we have the opportunity to put behind the old British conflict between those who have undervalued enterprise and those who undervalued fairness.

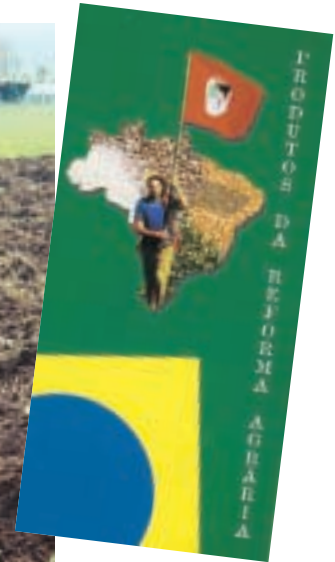
"In so doing we can be confident and face the future knowing that by working together we can meet the challenges of the 21st Century."

'As the decisions taken by BMW in relation to Rover show, in a time of globalisation we face two choices. A choice between uncontrolled change, forced by the markets and commercial pressures. Or a process of economic reform that delivers economic efficiency and social justice in which people and their communities can be genuine partners in change and not the innocent victims of change. Let me make it clear, we will always back the second option.'



INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

Hazel Plunkett, War on Want's Projects Director, travelled to Brazil to meet activists in the Landless Movement, a dynamic organisation, which has mobilised hundreds of thousands of the country's poorest citizens



At work in Novo Canudo and, above, a leaflet promoting MST products

Back to the land

A DIRTY red track cuts through the meticulously planted pine reservation. Line upon line of trees are hung with bags to collect sweetly scented sap. They end abruptly and give way to wilder countryside. It is here that 400 families in the settlement of Novo Canudo have begun the daunting task of working the land. They are, however, no ordinary farmers. Just a year ago, they were living in the violence and squalor of Sao Paulo, Brazil's largest city.

The inhabitants of Novo Canudo were recruited by the Movimento Sem Terra (MST) or the Landless Movement; an organisation formed in 1984 to ensure agrarian reform reaches the poor. Almost half of the country's arable land is owned by just 1 per cent of farmers. Under the slogan "Occupy! Resist! Produce!" the MST has helped over 600,000 people obtain their own land. Its strategy is to squat unused arable land and force the government to apply legislation, which obliges it to compensate the owner and hand over the property to the settlers.

Occupations begin at night when busloads of people are

less likely to be detected and prevented from setting up camp. On arrival, they clear the undergrowth, erect tents with black plastic sheeting and dig latrines. By daylight they are ready to resist the incursions of the police or private security forces employed by large landowners.

MST occupations are regularly broken up under the threat and use of violence. The first attempts of the people of Novo Canudo to squat land failed and a series of evictions forced them to relocate. In the process, some people lost heart and abandoned the struggle. However, for the families who refused to accept defeat, the better life they yearn for is slowly beginning to materialise. Eugenia, one of the group's leaders says, "Look around. Six months have gone by and we're still here ... We are learning to farm, sharing what we know and participating in training." However, until Novo Canudo acquires the legal title to land, they are unable to expand their production and realise their plans for self-sufficiency.

While the people of Novo Canudo await news on their claim to the land, other MST farms send them supplies of

Chhokar Family Justice Campaign

THE fight continues to bring the murderers of Surjit Singh Chhokar to justice. Sometimes called Scotland's Stephen Lawrence, Surjit Singh was brutally murdered on a public street over 19 months ago. To date, no one has been found guilty of this crime.

The Fire Brigades Union has always supported the Justice Campaign and last year at the STUC our ex-President, Ronnie Scott, made an impassioned plea to all delegates to give their support, which they now do.

Of the three men accused of this murder, one has walked free and the other two are still waiting to see if a trial will take place. For the first time in Scottish Legal history, a Scottish case is being put before the Privy Council in order that it can rule whether or not a trial should proceed. Obviously, appealing to the Privy Council is an expensive procedure. Financial contributions are vital.

The Campaign organised a fund raising event in Glasgow in the FBU Regional Offices a few weeks ago and many Regions from around the country were represented. Members should be proud to learn that a total of £4,000 was donated to the Campaign both by the Regions represented and by individual contributions.

If your Brigade, or Region, would like to make contributions to the fund feel free to send them to the Chhokar Family Justice Campaign, c/o the Scottish FBU Regional Office.

Surjit Singh Chhokar is often compared to Stephen Lawrence but our campaign insists that there is one big difference, Stephen Lawrence's killers are still walking the streets at liberty. We are demanding justice for Surjit Singh Chhokar.



Campaign supporters and FBU members in the union's Glasgow office



At first, the squatters live in tents of plastic sheeting (left)



**At the entrance to Novo Canudo
Pictures: Catherine Matheson,
War on Want**

rice, beans, oil and vegetables on a regular basis. Nobody forgets the hardships of occupations and support for newcomers to the MST is strong. Tiao, a former metal worker, was active in coordinating the first occupation in the state of Sao Paulo to achieve its objectives of winning land, but he believes the MST offers people much more. "The MST is about tackling the inequalities of the society and creating a world based on social justice and respect."

Today the land which Tiao occupied is farmed by a cooperative, which he helped set up more than ten years ago. Its members now live in decent houses with electricity and running water and grow enough to feed themselves. Together with other MST farms there is even surplus production. Tiao believes that the MST needs to harness its huge potential as a supplier and market its products locally. "If we could identify outlets and sell to supermarkets and stores, the cooperative could do more to support people in occupations to get their own land ..."

In September 1999 War on Want successfully applied for funds from the National Lottery Charities Board for a three year project which is helping the MST carry out market research, diversify agricultural production and process foods. In early 2000, the MST opened a shop, a sales office and a depot, which enable agrarian reform farmers to sell their produce directly onto the market.

The ideal is to pay the producers a proper price and eliminate the middle-men at the same time as making high quality and affordable goods available to the consumer. It is early days, but the shop, which opened in Marechal Deodoro in Sao Paulo, is proving popular with poor local residents and middle-class sympathisers alike.

SECTION 28

Tory bigotry must go



by Ken Ross
Divisional Secretary,
Strathclyde

FOR too long now the people of Scotland have been subjected to the most, mal-informed, inaccurate, damaging and offensive campaign to retain a piece of Tory bigotry, which is an affront to all decent minded human beings.

The 'Keep the Clause' Campaign, backed and funded by Brian Souter, along with the assistance of a certain newspaper, the Daily Record, have been spouting out homophobia and scare-mongering parents into thinking that the repeal of this clause with mean hell and damnation to our children.

Utter Nonsense!

They have the further audacity to try and use the Christian Bible to somehow justify their views. They are trying to say that the Bible states that homosexuality is wrong and degrading. When did Jesus Christ say that?

The fact is that He never mentioned the subject of homosexuality. He did, however, have a great deal to say about money and exploitation. The main thrust of the Bible is that it is against sin. One of the biggest sins it talks about is 'usury' – the taking of interest on a loan.

Jesus Christ continuously and quite vociferously throughout His life, spoke about His objection to the accumulation of wealth by individuals, at the expense of the many.

We in the modern day world refer to this as capitalism!

The Christian churches of the world maintained a ban on this right up to the late middle ages. Thereafter, the rise of Capitalism saw this policy quietly and discreetly abolished.

HYPOCRISY

Souter professes to be a Christian Fundamentalist. Isn't it ironic, however, that he accumulated his vast wealth using a highly competitive and predatory use of power and money, something, which, according to the Bible, is strictly forbidden!

The only thing fundamental about Souter is that he funda-

mentally disregards the teachings of Christ when it comes to amassing his considerable wealth, but fundamentally tries to utilise the Good Book in order to justify his own bigoted views.

The words transparent and hypocrite come to mind!

His condescending self-righteousness knows no bounds. He has the gall to tell parents that if we don't listen to him, our children will be 'put at risk' and will be 'damaged'.

It seems to me that the way to damage our kids is to turn them into homophobes, turn them into bigots and teach them how to hate. That's how we damage our kids!

The 'Keep the Clause' campaign has stated that they are not motivated by any prejudice against gays. Why then have they chosen a well-known homophobe as a spokesperson?

Jack Irvine is a real prize! In a tabloid column recently, he referred to homosexuals as "slobbering queers who want to get their hands on young boys' arses"! Added to that, a group supporting the 'Keep the Clause' campaign, compared homosexuals with child abusers.

Here's a fact to consider – the vast majority of paedophiles are heterosexual. If we are serious about protecting our children, should we not have a campaign against the 'promotion' of heterosexuality?

Their type of extreme, poisonous and obscene rhetoric is not only offensive to all decent minded people, but only serves to intensify and fuel the frenzy that they have created.

TOLERANCE

I sympathise with parents – I'm one myself. The confusion that these lies have installed is understandable, however, no matter what the question is, Brian Souter and Jack Irvine are most certainly not the answer.

They have ignored the fact that teachers and children's groups, such as Barnardos, Save the Children and Childline, to name but a few, support the repeal of the Clause.

And why do they support its repeal? Simply because they recognise that we must teach our children tolerance!

If we want to call ourselves a civilised society, then we can't advocate, at any level or at any age, isolating and vilifying individuals, just because they live their life differently.

Pre-school children do not naturally recognise differences – black or white, boy or girl, able or disabled – these

differences are taught. It is imperative that we ensure that their tolerance and acceptance of others is nurtured and further encouraged when they go through the school gates.

Souter's final insult to the intelligence and decency of parents, is his attempt to override the democratic process in the shape of his seriously flawed opinion poll.

We may not agree with everything that our Parliament proposes to do. However, we all have representatives within it who we can debate and discuss the issues with. We have all subscribed to the democratic process. The wealthy, like Souter, would prefer a more plutocratic form of society, which would enable them to dictate and impose their own agenda on the rest of us.

This is exactly what Souter is trying to do with this so-called referendum. Even when the result of his 'referendum' was announced, his lies continued, by trying to 'massage' the figures. 3,970,712 voting papers were sent out to the Scottish public. Only 31% decided to return them leaving 69%, quite rightly, ignoring his offensive attempt to intervene in the democratic process. This means that a total of 2,876,272 people (72.5%) do not agree with the retention of the clause.

However, Souter continues to say that because 86% of those who did vote want to keep the clause, that this somehow means that the 'majority' of the Scottish people agree with him.

All that this glorified poll has achieved is to escalate hatred and abuse against an already monsterised minority. Its hysterical, reactionary propaganda has led to parents being, quite understandably, confused and bewildered as to what the real issues are.

Unfortunately, the messages from the Christian Churches are no better. One of the richest organisations in the world is quick to demonise homosexuality, yet conveniently omits to mention a single word about 'usury'. Of course, it wouldn't do to go back to the bible, would it?

ISSUES

Let's be clear on what the repeal will, and will not, mean. Section 28 bans the 'acceptability' of homosexuality. It breeds discrimination and hatred towards this group of people by instilling in our children that this is unacceptable and wrong. The repeal will not mean that there will be 'gay lessons' in schools – this has never been the case and never will be. Teachers, Head Teachers, Education Authorities, the Government and the Law do not allow this.

Section 28 does not apply in Northern Ireland and there

is no 'promotion' of homosexuality there. There is also no campaign there to introduce this clause.

The repeal will mean that teachers will be able to meet the needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils. 82% of Teachers say that anti-gay bullying goes on. 40% of lesbian and gay pupils are bullied, with 1 in 5 of those attempting suicide. How would you feel if that were your son or daughter?

Despite Brian Souter's scurrilous remarks, our children will not be 'put at risk' by the repeal of the clause. In fact the exact opposite is true. The reason so many children's groups support the repeal is because they are aware of the harm that section 28 does to young lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

It also does no good to anyone else. All young people suffer if bullying and prejudice are allowed to flourish, not just the ones who are bullied.

The repeal of section 28 will not mean that there will be no safeguards in its place. It will be replaced by Section 26 of the Ethical Standards in Public Life Bill. This will in fact be more comprehensive than Section 28 in that it will apply to all teaching and will be appropriate to each pupil's age and development. The new guidelines are being reviewed by a group, which includes representatives from the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of Scotland, Children's Organisations and Education Authorities, and will be in place prior to the repeal of Section 28.

I urge everyone reading this to ensure that you are aware of the true facts and not just the Daily Record's fabrications. Parents must make an informed choice whether or not to support repeal. Unfortunately up until now, they have only been subjected to the publicity machine of the 'Keep the Clause' campaign.

I want for my son what every parent wants for his or her children. I want the true family values of love, respect, honesty and commitment to be cherished and encouraged.

The retention of this clause does not allow this. We have the responsibility to instil into our children's emotional and social development, the correct and decent values that make for a fair and equitable society, which nurtures social justice for all.

We have the opportunity to rid our society of this awful, discriminatory piece of legislation once and for all.

We can ensure our children's future as tolerant, fair minded and understanding human beings, who accept the choices of others and the differences between individuals.

This is what makes for a civilised society.

PENSIONERS PARLIAMENT

Young and old – let's stand together

REPORT OF THE FIFTH ANNUAL PENSIONERS PARLIAMENT
ORGANISED BY THE NATIONAL PENSIONERS CONVENTION
9-11 MAY 2000 WINTER GARDENS, BLACKPOOL

OVER 2500 delegates from all over the UK attended the fifth and most successful Pensioners Parliament in Blackpool from 9-11 May. Amid public debates on the level and future of the state pension, the quality and cost of community care and age discrimination and rationing within the NHS, the representatives demonstrated the growing strength of the pensioners' movement and its ability to take the campaign forward in the next 12 months.

An impressive march of over 1000 activists from the North Pier to the Winter Gardens was just one of the high points of the three days.

In his opening address to the Parliament, NPC President Jack Jones said: "We want to strengthen the hand of every organisation campaigning for pensioners, by bringing them together and acting with one voice. If we continue to do that then we will succeed in our cause to see that pensioners get justice."

He went on to launch the NPC's new national petition, calling for a substantial increase in the basic state pension and all future increments to be related to whichever is the greater of the average wage index or the retail price index.

"It will depend on all of us to make sure this petition really is successful, to show the strength of the case that we are advancing to the government," he added.

These views were echoed by NPC ally and UNISON General Secretary, Rodney Bickerstaffe. Outlining how older people were often viewed as having "served their time", the UNISON leader made a call for solidarity between the generations saying: "If black and white should stand together, and men and women should stand together, then young and old

should stand together." He also called for an end to discrimination in the health service and the need to prevent the ideas of the 1930s from ever returning to our society.

Delegates then led a wide ranging debate on the issue of direct action and publicity. Criticism of the media for ignoring the demands of the pensioners' movement was widespread and details were given of local campaigning activities such as lobbying MPs, leafleting the public, blocking roads, sit-ins and standing pensioner candidates in local elections.

But the NPC has always stressed that it is not simply concerned with pensions, but all issues, which affect older people. NPC supporter and campaigner Evelyn McEwen presented a very detailed case against the current level and quality of community care provision throughout the country, saying that it was often seen as the Cinderella service.

"We must show the public and the government that social services often deny respect to elderly people simply because of limited resources," she said.

The government was also criticised for delaying the implementation of the Royal Commission's recommendations for free nursing and personal care at the point of need, whilst delegates came forward with case after case highlighting the abuse and neglect of older people.

The Parliament was urged to send details of such cases to the NPC office, as the first stage in mounting a national campaign to improve the quality, availability and cost of community care throughout the country.

Many felt the highlight of the Parliament was the question and answer session conducted by Pensions Minister, Jeff Rooker. Mr. Rooker offered a packed Winter Gardens a defence of the government's policy on the basic state pension including the introduction of the means-tested Minimum Income Guarantee. But delegates were unimpressed and responded with a huge list of well consid-

LETTERS

Thank you all, and remember it does not always happen to someone else

I AM writing to thank everyone who helped me in my compensation claim against the London Fire Brigade following my spinal injury sustained during an unrealistic training exercise.

My old Watch at Northolt who visited me regularly, and helped me come to terms with the fact that I was not going to be quite the same person I was.

Andy Price (now with Cheshire) who came to all the Brigade and DSS tribunals and probably knows more about vertebrae now than most doctors; he also kept in touch and generally was there whenever I needed someone to talk to.

To Craig Jones of Thompsons, who persevered with my case whilst facing the possibility that training exercise cases were not the most high percentage cases to win, and Stan Wyness my expert witness.

A very big thank you obviously goes to the FBU; without their support and financial backing I would not have had a chance to pursue the case.

After a fair bit of rehabilitation and hard work re-training and learning about modern technology i.e. computers, I am now working at ASPIRE, a spinal injuries charity, which aims to rehabilitate and train people with spinal cord injuries.

I have attained an NVQ 2 Gym Instructors award and assist in setting gym programmes for both able-bodied and spinal injured people.

If anyone out there is looking for a worthwhile charity to support, then please give us a call (020 8420 6701 and ask for Lyndsey in fundraising). Remember, it does not necessarily always happen to someone else.

To everyone out there who knows me and those in Brigades who do not, "Be Safe", training is important, but not worth losing your job or sustaining a serious injury for!

Tim Jones

Ex LFF London Fire Brigade

**Jack Jones:
strengthen
the hand of
every
organisation
campaigning
for
pensioners**



**Rodney
Bickerstaffe:
end
discrimination
in the health
service**



ered arguments and questions.

Delegates also had the opportunity to exchange ideas on campaigning and discuss how best to take the pensioners' case forward. It was clear from the discussion that there are a variety of activities taking place throughout the country, showing that the grass roots pensioners' movement is increasingly growing in strength.

In closing the Parliament, Jack Jones said it had been a very successful three days, which had boosted the confidence of members in continuing the fight for justice. He emphasised that through the NPC's campaign we could build a "human society" in which all were valued and respected.

25 YEAR BADGES



London Executive Council member Mick Shaw presents his badge to HQ Officers Branch Secretary Terry Adams



Neil Potter receives his badge from Brendan French, SC G5



Colin Hylton (left) and Tony Brown receive their badges from Branch Official John Mair. All serve at Washington, Tyne and Wear



Keith Stevens and John McSharry from Southern Command receiving their badges



Alan Buchanan of Green Watch, Polmadie, receives his badge from Divisional Secretary Ken Ross



Dave Simpson presents Mick Gibson, Tyne and Wear, with his badge



Steve Law receives his badge from EC member Phil Micallef



Paul Malpass receives his badge from T Guest at Newcastle under Lyme



Jake (John) McPherson and Peter Finlay receive their badges from Brigade Education Officer Kenny Munro in Edinburgh



Thirteen West Midlands members received their badges at a ceremony in Bournbrook Station. Left to right: Cliff MacDonald; Jim Titley; Phil Roberts; Lou McCollin; Larry Burton; Bill Hubball; John Dutton; Martin Demers; Paul Lumley; Steve Grahame; Bob Davies; John Callard (Divisional Chair); Ziggy Jaskowski; Dave Carter (Divisional Secretary)



Divisional Chair C Div N Trenchard presents Richard Whitworth with his badge



Mick Mather (above) and Graham Proctor (below) received their badges from Bro A Watcham, C Div Secretary at Immingham



Norman Rees, Tonypany Branch, receives his badge from Clive Spanswick, Officers Chair



Branch Secretary Bro. Williams presents LFF White with his badge